

Travelers

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They were four when they set sail on Feb. 10, 2015: Eric, the lifelong sailor who left his job as post-production vice president at Sony Pictures; Leslie, an opera singer with a Ph.D. in music; Bryce, an honor roll student at Cabrillo Middle School; and son Trent, then a sixth-grader at Cabrillo.

Trent left the boat early, flying from France to California in August to stay with his uncle and start his freshman year at Calabasas High School. He'll hook up with the family Saturday morning.

The around-the-world sail was a trip Eric dreamed about since he was 14 and sailed with his uncle and brothers to Hawaii. Before he married Leslie in 1994, he told her the around-the-world journey was part of the union.

"I just thought there was so much of the world I wanted to see and experience," he said. "There was a prenuptial agreement; we were going to do this."

On a trip financed by years of saving, they visited 41 countries in six continents, crossed 10 seas and navigated three canals. They spent two years in French Polynesia, where Bryce and Trent attended school and learned to speak French.

They sailed to an island in the South Pacific inhabited by six families, bringing them food supplies and materials. They were paid back with a meal of coconut crabs, lobster and heart-of-palm salad. Refreshments included a cocktail stored in a jug buried in the sand. It was made of bread yeast and lychee nuts.

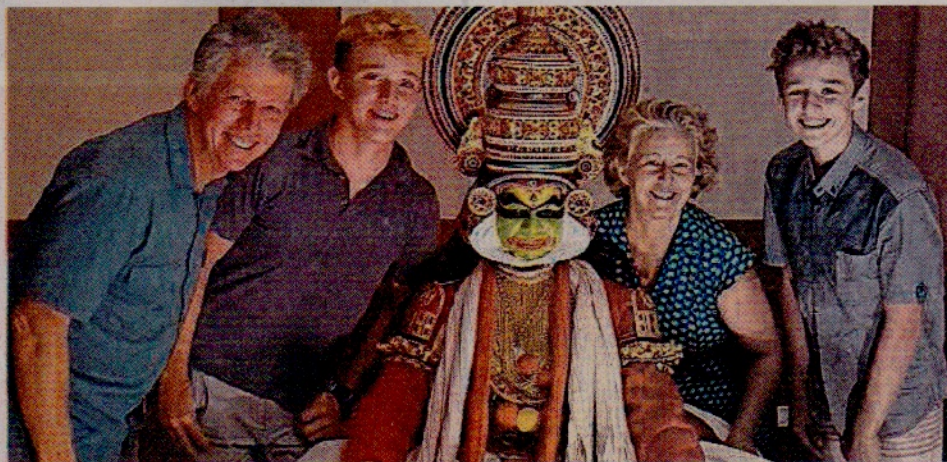
They sailed to the Galapagos Islands, Malaysia, Singapore, Morocco and pretty much everywhere in between.

"My favorite place? Greece," said Bryce, a surfer and skateboarder who is now 17. "Mostly because of the girls."

They met four men who were forced to abandon their fishing boat in the South Pacific, radioing in about mechanical problems though the real issue was an empty fuel tank.

"If you say you ran out of fuel, you have to pay for the helicopter ride," said Eric who agreed to take the men back to their boat on a journey that stretched into Christmas. "They needed it for their livelihood. It was going to support four families."

They sailed across the Gulf of Aden in a nonstop marathon, extra jugs of fuel



The Rigney family of Eric, from left, Bryce, Leslie and Trent, poses with a Kathakali dancer in Cochin, India. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO/RIGNEY FAMILY

tied to the deck to limit their stay in waters once infamous for pirates. The gulf was teeming with security in the form of naval warships and aircraft.

"There were only two times where we had concerns there might be pirates," said Eric. "Both times it turned out to be fishermen."

A story in *The Star* about the beginning of their journey brought at least one online commenter who suggested the adventure was irresponsible, likely to trigger a rescue response that would cost taxpayers lots of money.

"We didn't do that," said Leslie, rattling off the precautions the family took and then making a raspberry sound into the phone. "So on that guy."

There were a couple of hiccups, like when the boat was anchored near Australia's Coconut Island and Bryce decided to swim ashore while his parents slept. He bypassed immigration and customs regulations and was brought to his father by an officer who noted a tiger shark had been spotted recently in the waters.

"He said, 'Your son is one lucky boy,'" Eric said.

They became nautical nomads, witnessing the High Holy Days celebration in New Delhi, India, taking a four-legged ride through Indonesia's Lombok Elephant Park and chronicling their adventures with blogs, photos and video.

"You were able to check out Planet Earth at least a little bit and do something bigger than just the state you live in," said Bryce, noting it's hard to explain to friends what it was really like. "It's not as easy as it might sound. We lived on a boat for four-and-a-half years."

Now back in California, Eric will like-

ly rejoin the entertainment industry. Leslie will return to music, possibly in an academic role. They'll likely settle somewhere in the Los Angeles area though Bryce may stay with friends closer to Ventura.

"He said, 'I've lived with you for five years. I don't want to see you for awhile,'" Eric said with a laugh, noting the trip's end brings a sense of excite-



Bryce Rigney surveys Morocco during his family's sailing journey around the world. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO/RIGNEY FAMILY

ment over the uncharted future rather than disappointment over what is ending.

"I knew this was going to be a chapter and not a book," he said.

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